

## Abstract

The work is a general analysis and evaluation of the results of an extensive rescue excavation (2.939 features, out of which 1.470 were post and column holes), that was carried out by the Archaia company at the Kněževes site (Praha-západ district) in the year 1998. In an area of more than 10 ha, evidence of settlement in several prehistoric and historic periods was recorded (Neolithic, Eneolithic, Hallstatt period, Early La Tène, Hillfort period), however, it was particularly the Bronze Age, where the majority of the finds belong. An analysis from different viewpoints, supplemented with selective descriptive and visual documentation, represents the focal point of the submitted treatise. In the introductory part, there are described the progress and methods of excavation, the geomorphologic conditions, the subsoil and soil coverage on the site, as well as the expected vegetation in the area of interest on the basis of scientific analyses (macroremains, charcoal). Attention is paid also to the history of archaeological research within the cadastre of the current village of Kněževes and the neighbouring Kněžívka. From the beginning of the Bronze Age (the early phase of the Únětice culture) date 24 inhumation graves equipped with pottery and occasionally also with copper/bronze earrings. 16 features of settlement character belong to the same time period. The rare use of the site in the Middle Bronze Age (Tumulus culture, Br B–C: 12 features + intrusion) was succeeded by intensive settlement activities in the following time period of the Late to Final Bronze Age (Bylany and Štítary cultures, Br C2/D – Ha B2-3: 1.222 datable features). The most numerous features, with conclusive dating material, were storage pits (granaries), of which, in the majority of cases, just the lower parts or bottoms remained preserved. Also larger, relatively deeper irregular pits occurred (so-called clay pits). Post or possibly column holes, indicating overhead wooden constructions of residential buildings, could only seldom be clearly classed as belonging to the Urnfield period. The main components of the recorded rich assemblages of the Knovíz and Štítary cultures were analysed separately. Their most important part is traditionally represented by numerous pottery fragments that were, from the typological-chronological viewpoint, observed within the framework of 389 selected characteristic complexes. In a number of features, other clay artefacts were present as well, such as weaving weights, wheels, spindle whorls etc. In total, 65 bronze artefacts were found, whereas these are predominantly tinier items or their fragments, possibly lost in the settlement. A certain exception is represented by personal jewellery (wire hair decorations and rings), recorded on human skeletons in settlement features. The most numerous and chronologically most important are pins (23 pieces). Other objects, such as needles, awls, arrowheads, fragments of sheet-metals, bars and wires, a ring, a sickle tang, a clamp, etc. are present as well. The preserved material sources are also supplemented by bone and horn industry (e.g. chisels, awls, points, smoothers, spatulae, “skates”, hammers etc.) whereas the function of smooth and sometimes even decorated talus bones of cattle remains unclear (gaming stones?). The percentage of stone industry was also quite significant. It fulfilled especially the function of striking tools (chipping tools, mallets, retouchers), but also of different smoothers and working pads. Also crushers and pads for grinding grain are represented. Indirect evidence of bronze smelting was also found on the site. This is a fragment of a half of a stone mould made of local raw material that most probably served for the manufacture of socket chisels. Rarely, also traces of raw bronze material were detected on pottery fragments and on a stone core. Special attention was paid to two features that contained numerous fragments of flat dish-shaped saucers with a twisted rim. These were interpreted as probable secondarily deposited sacrificial offerings. In one of these features, there were, on top of that, also fragments of large branching “stands” made of imperfectly burnt clay that, in the context of several lines of post holes, could point to the existence of a large overhead wooden structure of ritual character, possibly a sanctuary. In several settlement features, there were found human skeletons or their parts, often in non-anatomical positions. The remains of several individuals (both adults and children) thrown into a pit were not exceptional, along with “burials” of separate skulls or discoveries of individual human bones in the fills. In total, 107 individuals were documented, originating from 78 features the majority of which belonged to the Knovíz culture. Several settlement pits contained whole skeletons of animals. Complex analysis of the material assemblage enabled us to distinguish six basic settlement horizons, copying, as a rule, the main development trends that can be observed in the course of the Late and Final Bronze Age. Settlement activity on the site was most intensive in the peak period of the Knovíz culture (Ha A2/B1), however, it significantly dropped during the following period of the Štítary culture (Ha B2-3). This could possibly be related to intense Final Bronze Age settlement on a nearby site in the cadastral area of Kněžívka. The absolute dating of the Kněževes settlement was confirmed by four radiocarbon measurements.